VENOM

GUEST-STARRING SPIDER-MAN!

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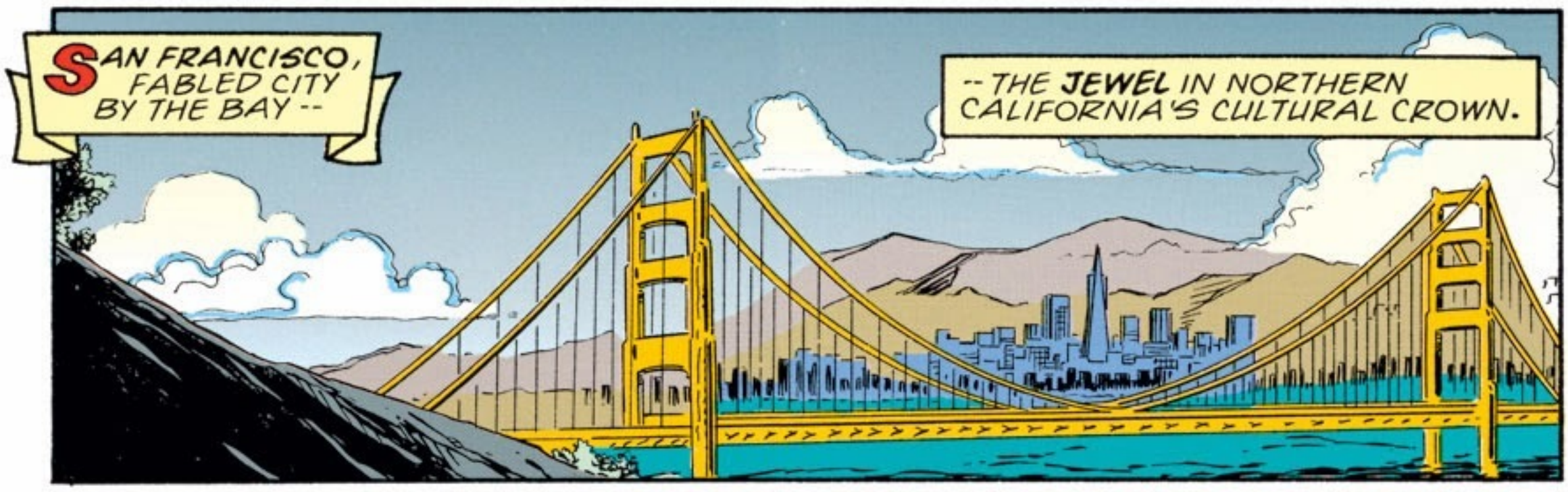
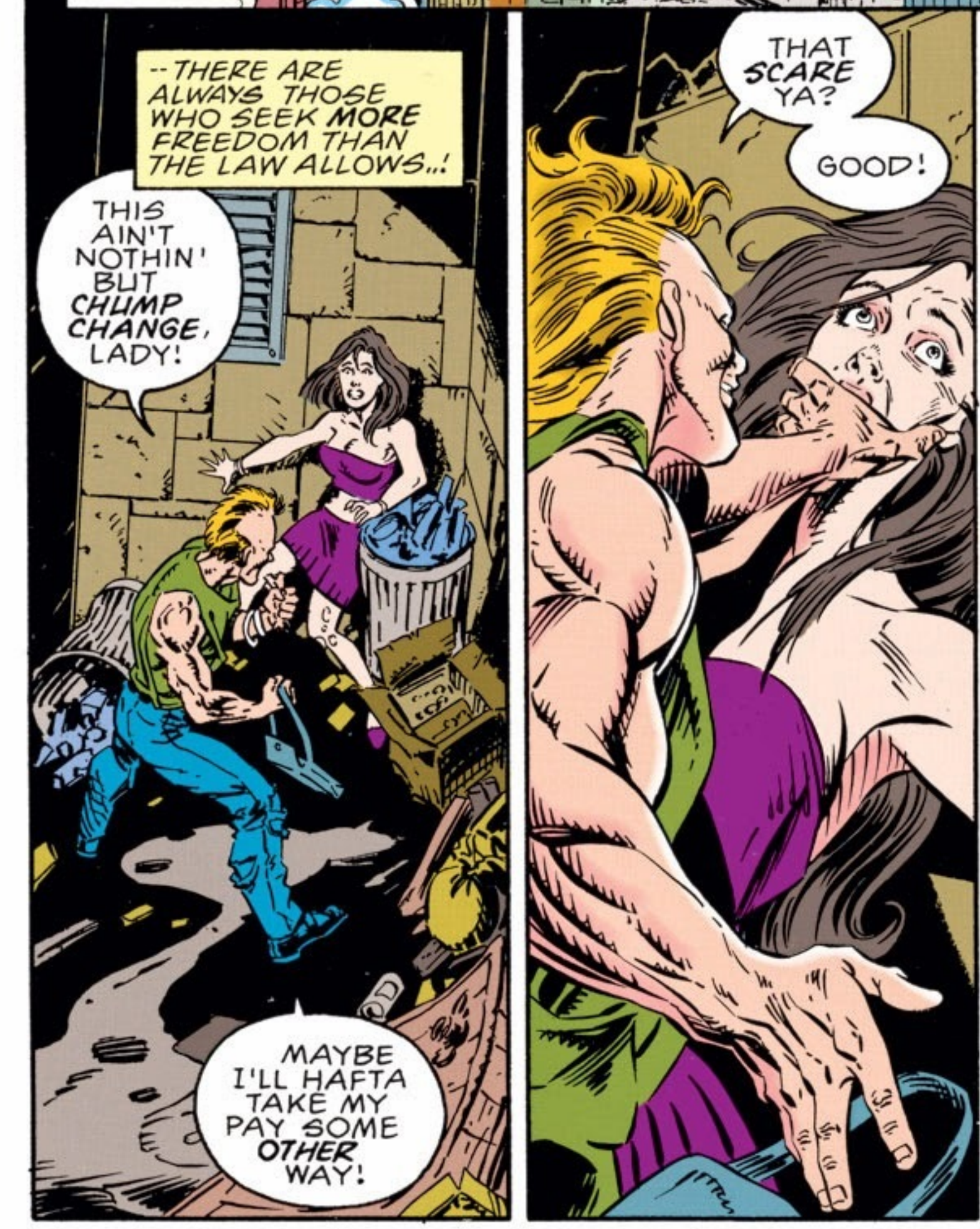
PART ONE OF SIX

NOW IN HIS OWN LIMITED SERIES!


SAN FRANCISCO, FABLED CITY BY THE BAY --
-- THE JEWEL IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S CULTURAL CROWN.

FROM THE HIPPIE MOVEMENT OF THE SIXTIES TO HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLES IN THE NINETIES, SAN FRANCISCO HAS LONG BEEN A MECCA OF CREATIVITY, A HAVEN OF FREEDOM.
BUT, AS WITH MOST URBAN AREAS IN THIS MODERN AGE --

-- THERE ARE ALWAYS THOSE WHO SEEK MORE FREEDOM THAN THE LAW ALLOWS...!
THIS AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT CHUMP CHANGE, LADY!
MAYBE I'LL HAFTA TAKE MY PAY SOME OTHER WAY!


THAT SCARE YA?
GOOD!

I ALWAYS LIKE SEEIN' FEAR IN MY VICTIM'S EYES...!

Stan Lee PRESENTS:
VENOM™
LETHAL PROTECTOR
WHAT A COINCIDENCE!
SO DO WE!
DAVID MICHELINIE WRITER
MARK BAGLEY PENCILER
DeLaROSA & MILGROM INKERS
RICHARD STARKINGS LETTERER
MARIE JAVINS COLORIST
DANNY FINGEROTH EDITOR
TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF
PART ONE:
DRIFTING

YOU'RE *DESPICABLE!* YOU AND *ALL* YOUR KIND!

PREYING ON THE *DEFENSELESS*, BRINGING NOTHING BUT *MISERY!*

PAIN!

DEATH!

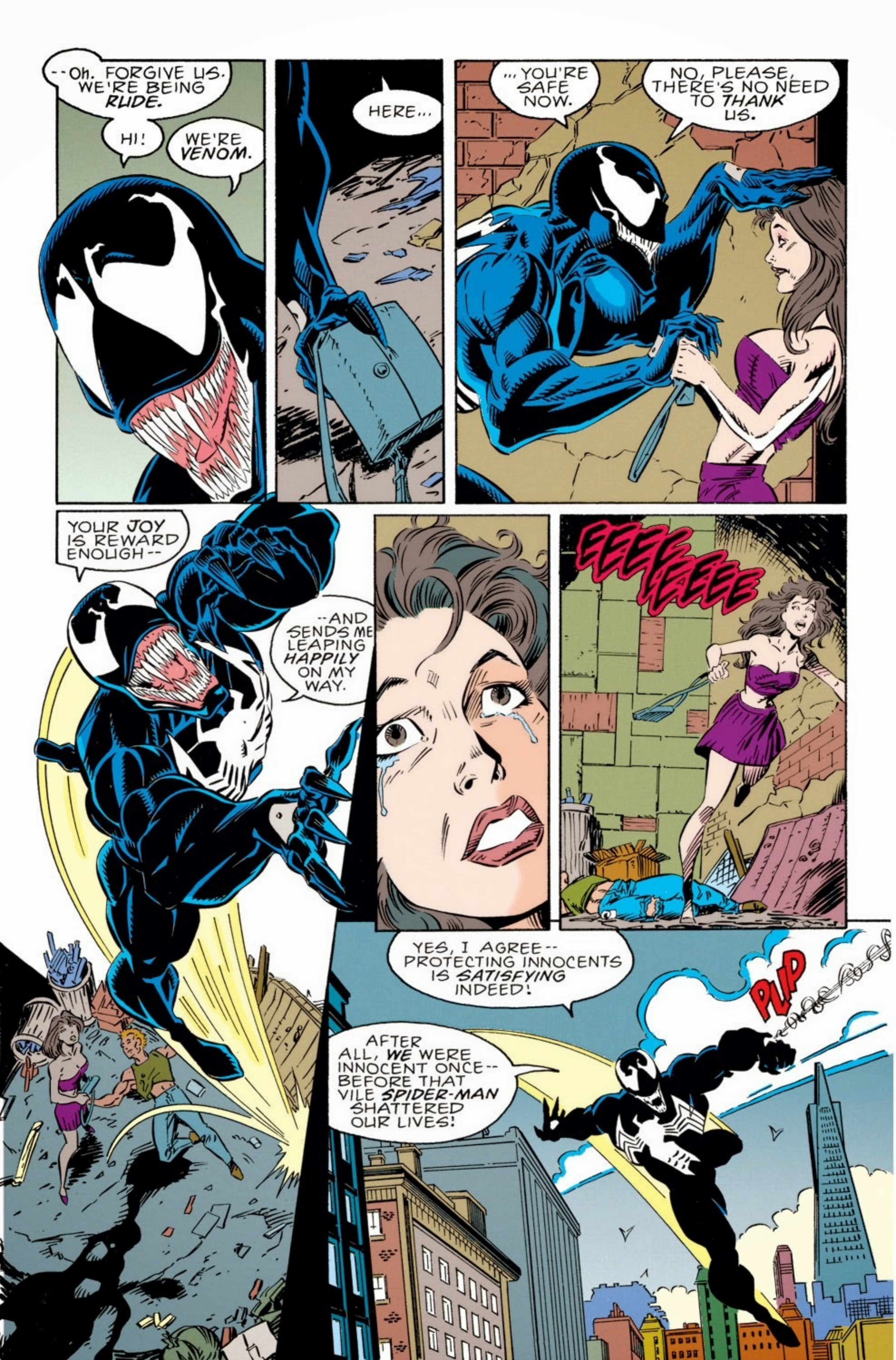
YOU MAKE US SICK!

WH-WHAT'RE YOU--

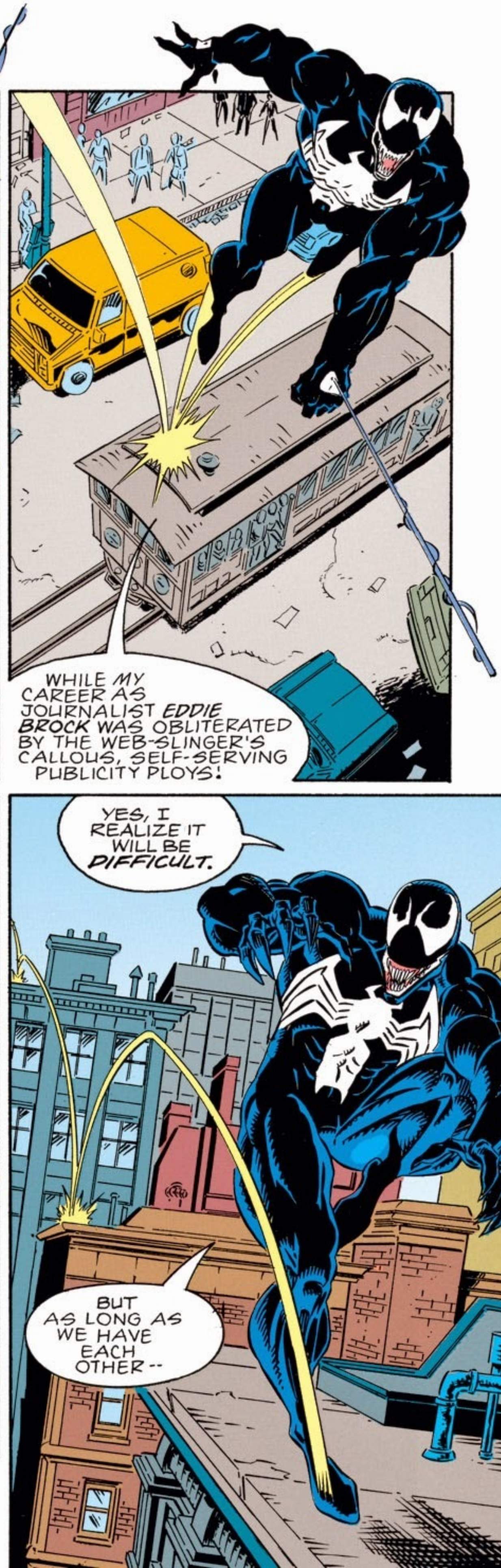
GHLF GHHHHH GHHK KK

IT'S OVER!

NOW YOU'LL DO NOTHING BUT *DECAY*, RUNNING IN RIVULETS OF ROT AND *CORRUPTION!* MINGLING WITH THE REST OF THE *FILTH* IN THE SEWERS OF --

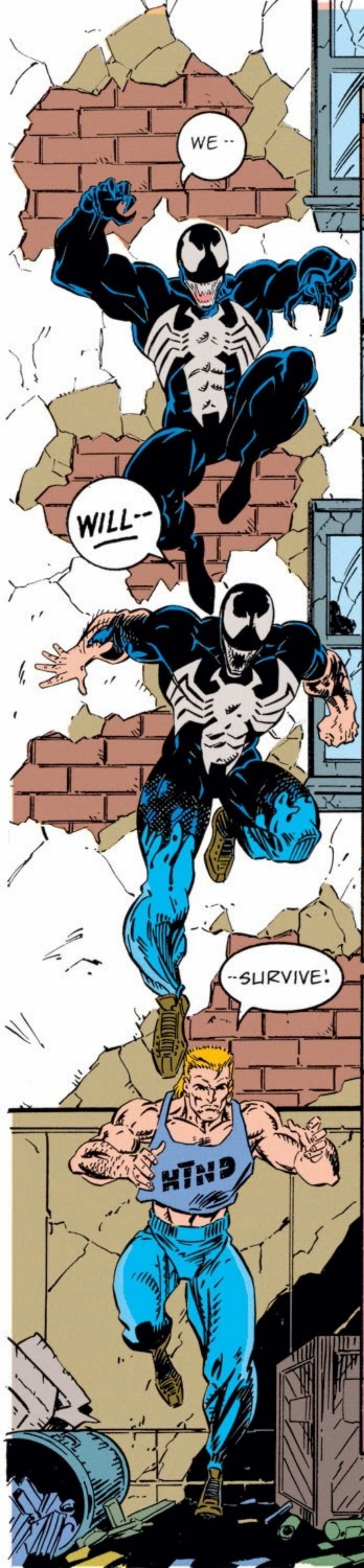

--Oh. FORGIVE US. WE'RE BEING RUDE.
HI!
WE'RE VENOM.
HERE...
...YOU'RE SAFE NOW.
NO, PLEASE, THERE'S NO NEED TO THANK US.
YOUR JOY IS REWARD ENOUGH--
--AND SENDS ME LEAPING HAPPILY ON MY WAY.
YES, I AGREE-- PROTECTING INNOCENTS IS SATISFYING INDEED!
AFTER ALL, WE WERE INNOCENT ONCE-- BEFORE THAT VILE SPIDER-MAN SHATTERED OUR LIVES!
PLIP

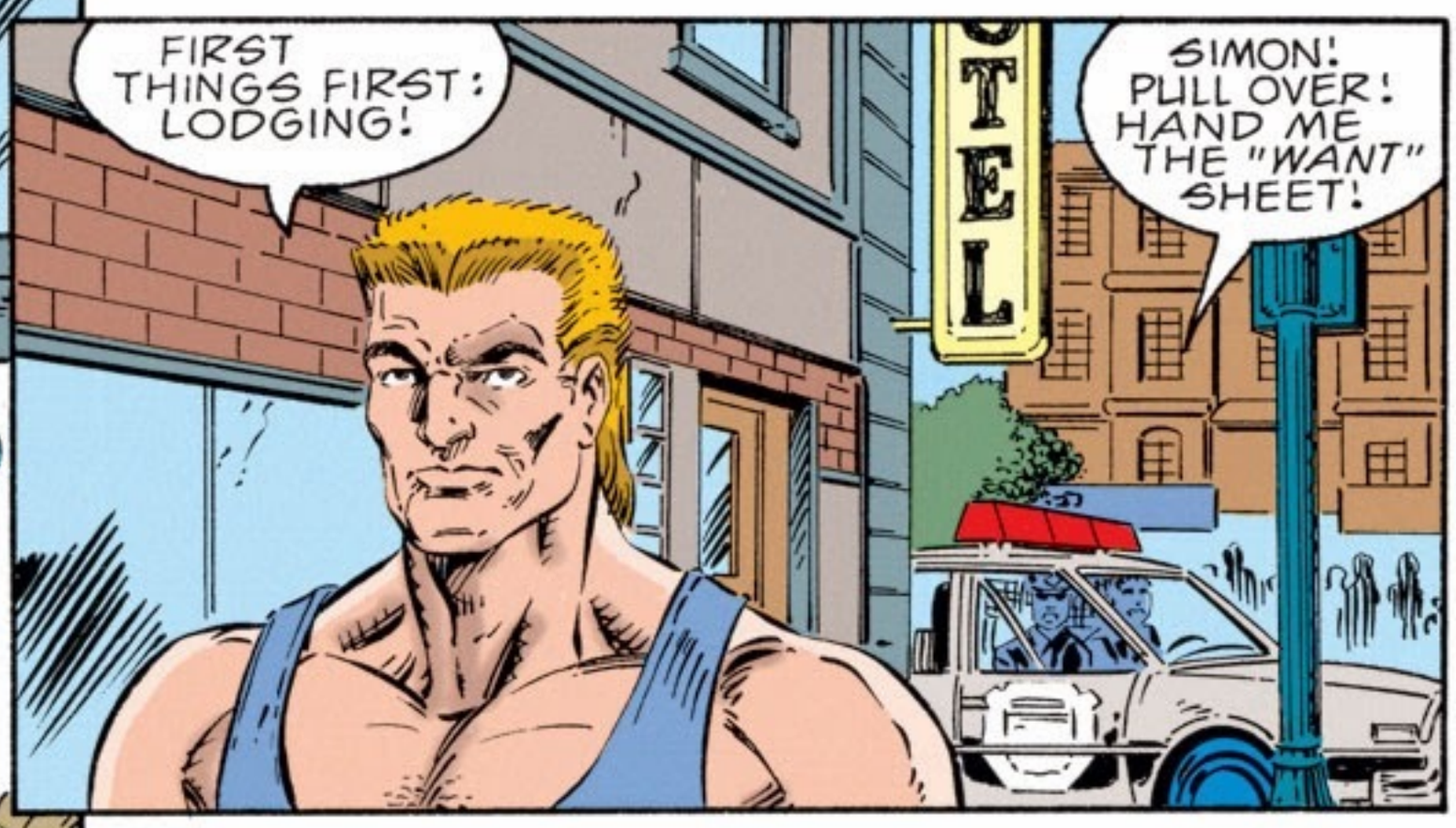
YOU, MY ALIEN FRIEND, WERE REJECTED WHEN YOU TRIED TO BOND WITH HIM, TO BECOME HIS LIVING COSTUME --
-- A GIFT I ACCEPTED GRATE-FULLY!


WHILE MY CAREER AS JOURNALIST EDDIE BROCK WAS OBLITERATED BY THE WEB-SLINGER'S CALLOUS, SELF-SERVING PUBLICITY PLOYS!

TRUE, WE HAVE RECONCILED OUR HATRED A BIT, HAVING REALIZED THAT, IN HIS OWN TWISTED WAY, SPIDER-MAN ALSO HELPS INNOCENTS!
THAT'S WHY WE'VE COME HERE, TO THE TOWN WHERE I WAS BORN... TO START OUR LIFE ANEW!

YES, I REALIZE IT WILL BE DIFFICULT.
BUT AS LONG AS WE HAVE EACH OTHER --


WE --
WILL--
--SURVIVE!


FIRST THINGS FIRST: LODGING!
SIMON! PULL OVER! HAND ME THE "WANT" SHEET!

THAT LOOK LIKE EDWARD BROCK TO YOU? HAIR'S DIFFERENT, BUT...
CAN'T TELL FROM HERE. BETTER MAKE SURE BEFORE CALLIN' IT IN!
P.D.
BROCK

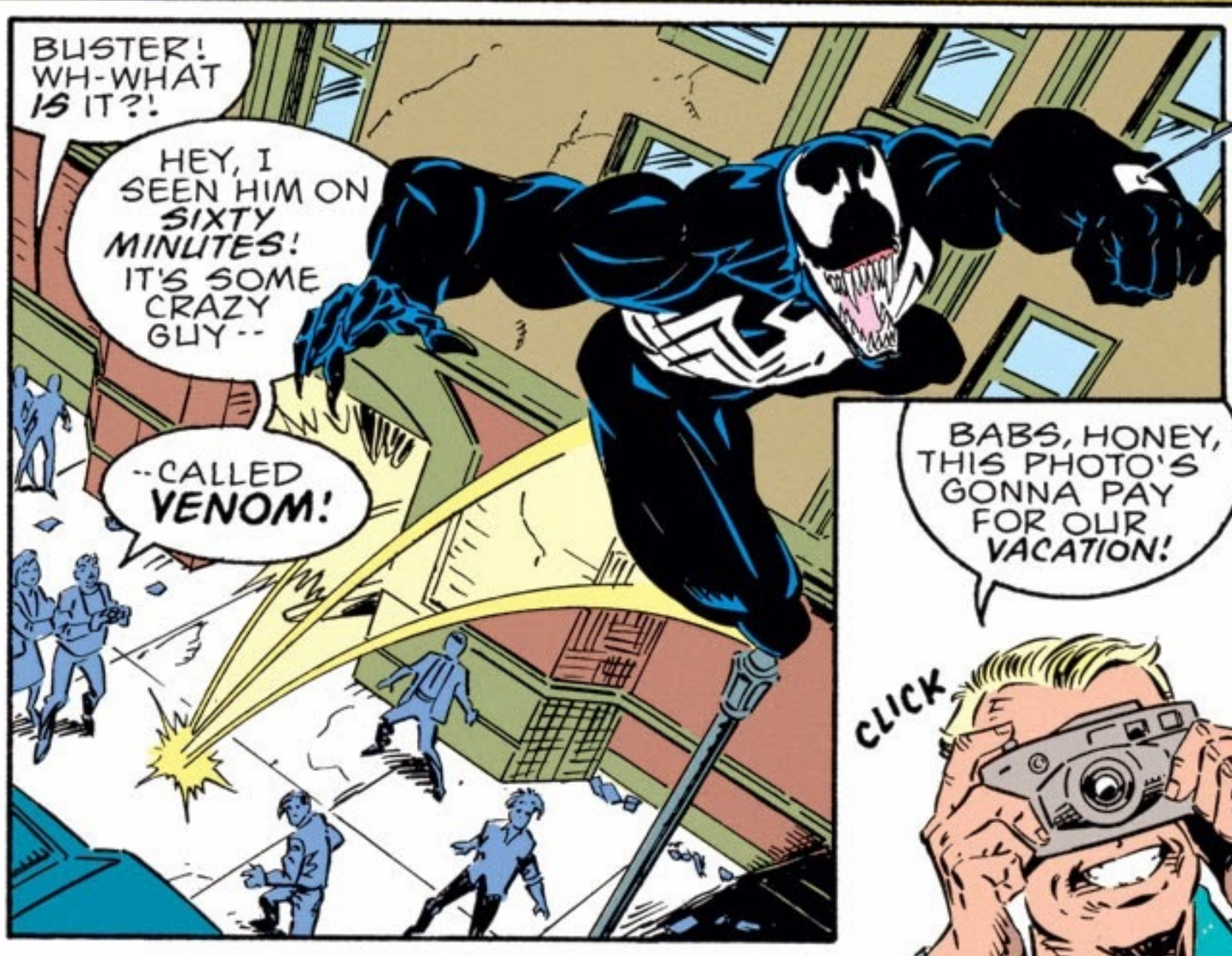
...NO, JUST ONE NIGHT. WE'LL -- I'LL -- LET YOU KNOW TOMORROW IF --
HIND

KEEP THOSE HANDS WHERE WE CAN SEE 'EM, FELLA! WE JUST WANT TO ASK YOU SOME -- HOLY GEEZ! I-IT IS HIM!
Y-YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, BROCK -- FOR MURDER!
EVEN HERE, NO PEACE..!
NO PETS PARTIES LOUD MUSIC COOKING SPITTING SMOKING TIE-DYES YOUNG-BLOODS
HIND

PLIP
PLIP
WE DON'T WANT TO DO THIS!
WE KNOW YOU'RE JUST DOING YOUR JOBS!
AND FINE JOBS THEY ARE!
SPATCH
PESH
THIS HURTS US --

--ALMOST AS MUCH AS IT DOES YOU!
WHAMP
RATES
THUB

Oh, ONE OTHER THING: CANCEL THAT ROOM!
Y-Y-YOU BET!


BUSTER! WH-WHAT IS IT?!
HEY, I SEEN HIM ON SIXTY MINUTES! IT'S SOME CRAZY GUY --
--CALLED VENOM!
BABS, HONEY, THIS PHOTO'S GONNA PAY FOR OUR VACATION!

CLICK

MANHATTAN, SOME HOURS LATER...

NICE PHOTOS, PETE!

DAILY BUGLE

THANKS, BEN, I'M JUST GLAD ROBBIE **BOUGHT** THEM -- I CAN USE THE MONEY!

TOO BAD **VENOM** DIDN'T RESURFACE **HERE**. PICTURES OF HIM **ALWAYS** SELL!

YEAH, I-- **VENOM**?!

WHAT ABOUT HIM?

JUST CAME IN OVER THE U.P.I WIRE -- SOME TOURIST TOOK THIS SNAP OF VENOM IN **SAN FRANCISCO**, AFTER A RUN-IN WITH LOCAL POLICE!

GUESS WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIM **THIS** TIME!

UH, RIGHT.

I WAS **WONDERING** WHERE HE'D GONE! BUT NOW THAT I KNOW, WHAT DO I **DO**?

AFTER ALL, IN A WAY...

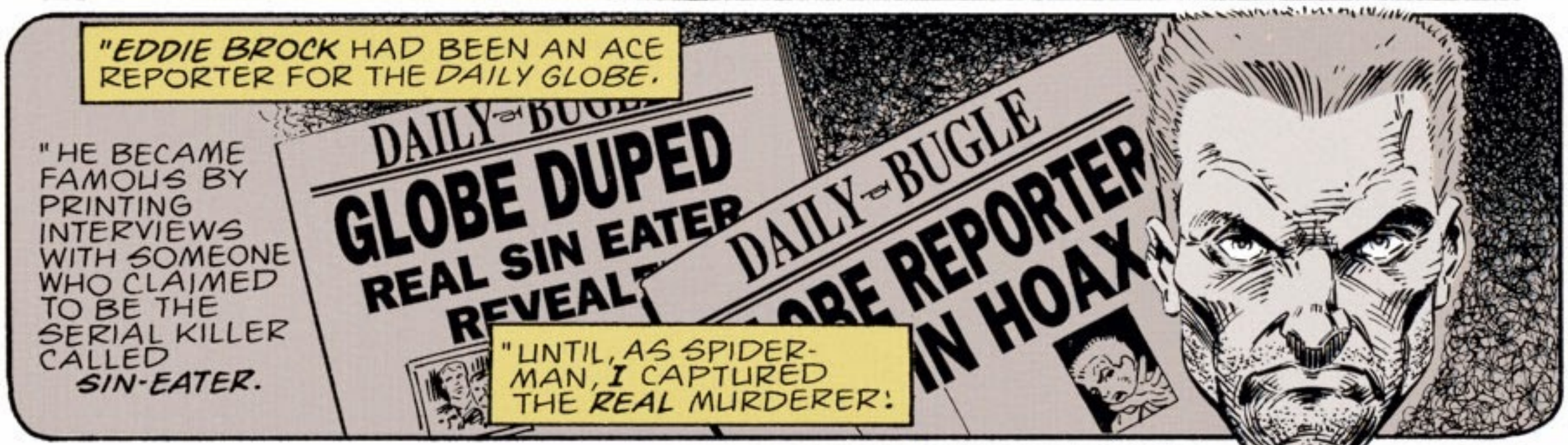
...I'M **RESPONSIBLE** FOR VENOM'S **EXISTENCE**!

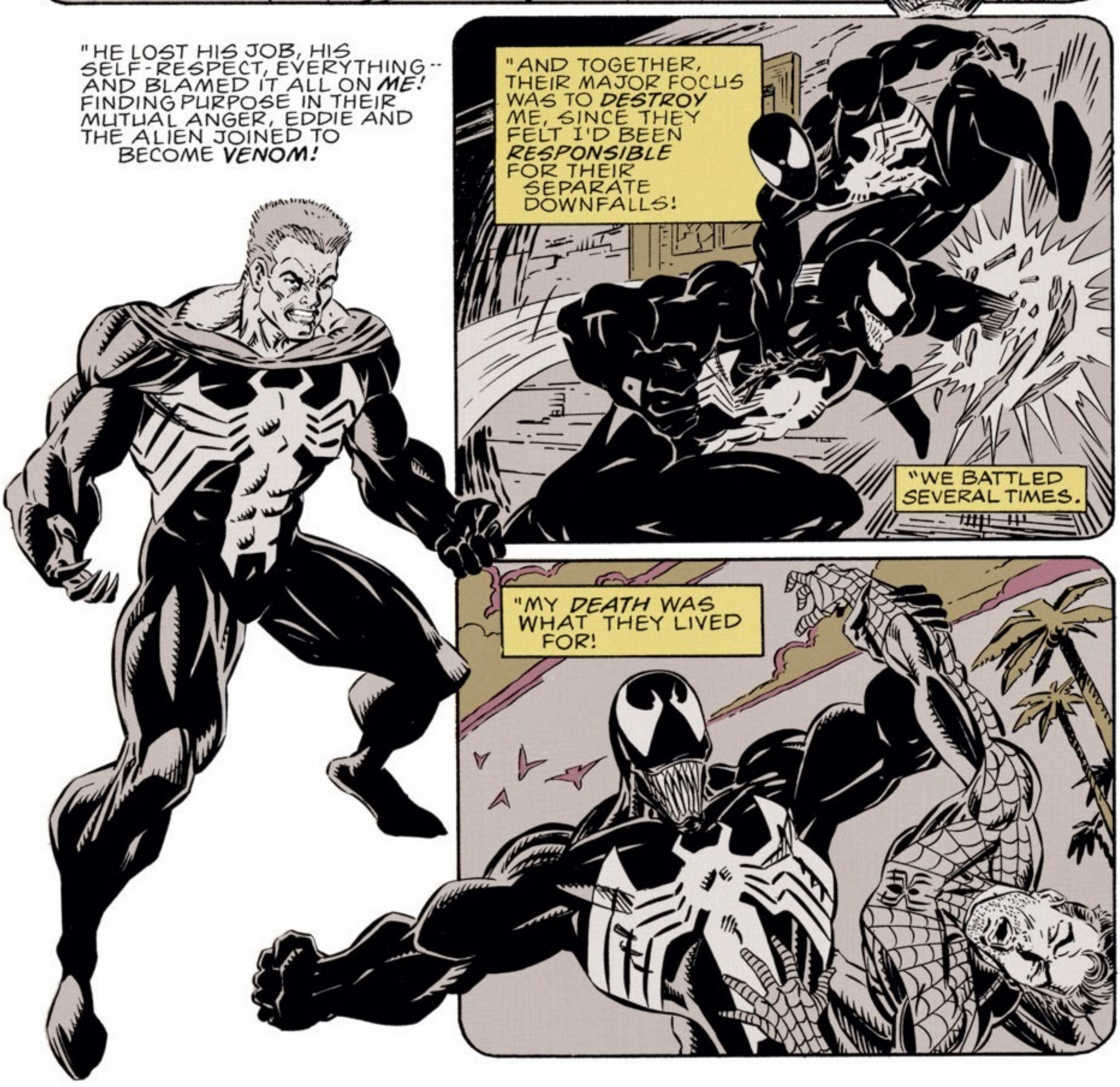
"**I'M** THE ONE WHO -- AS **SPIDER-MAN** -- BROUGHT THE ALIEN SYMBIOTE TO EARTH, WHEN I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A PROGRAMMABLE **COSTUME**!

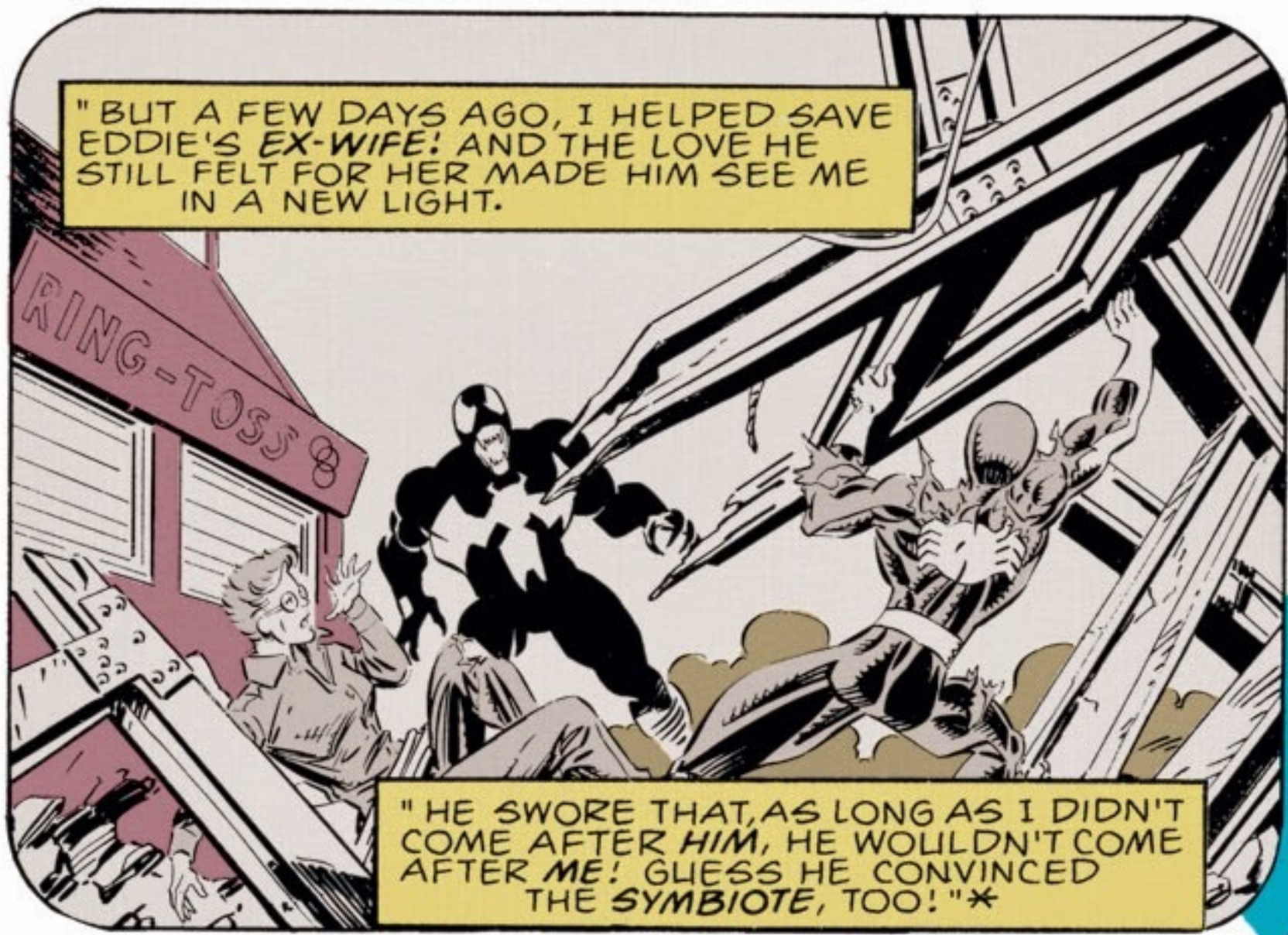
"I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS **ALIVE**, THAT IT WANTED TO JOIN WITH ME **FOREVER**!

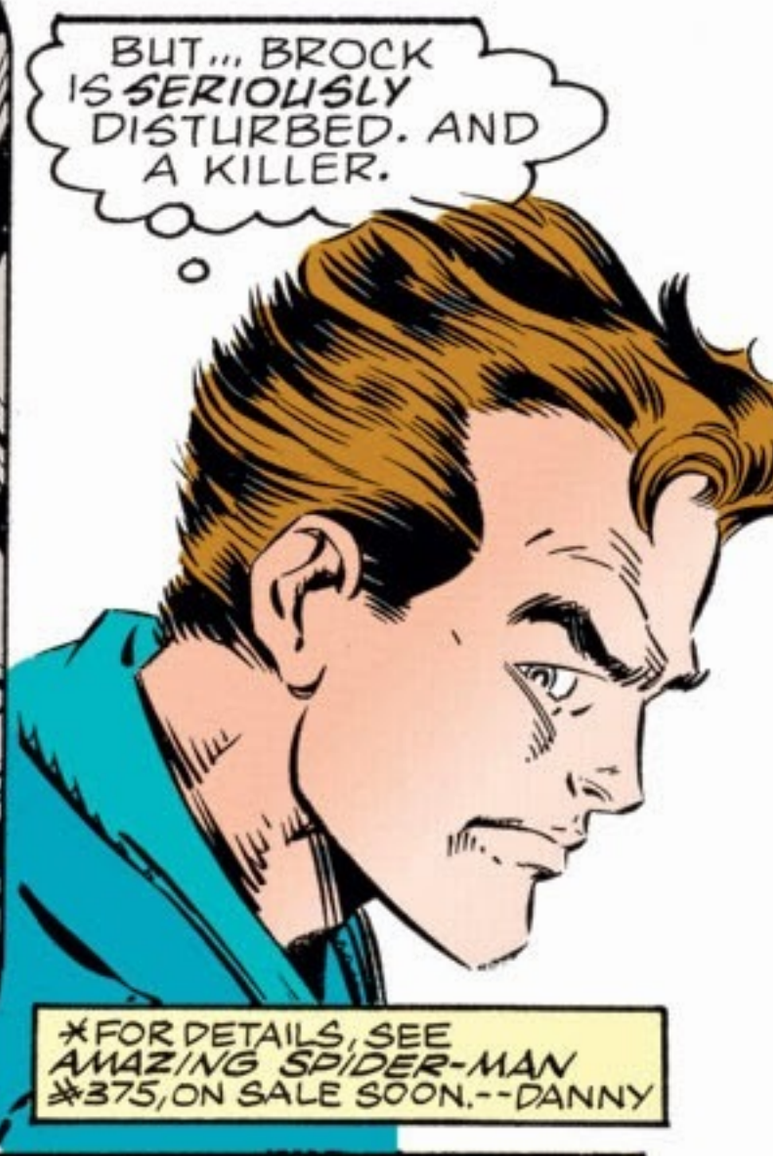
"I FINALLY HAD TO USE **SOUND** TO GET RID OF IT -- THE LOUD TOLLING OF CATHEDRAL BELLS! FOR A WHILE, I THOUGHT I'D... **KILLED** IT!

"BUT IT WAS ONLY TEMPORARILY DESTROYED. HURT AS MUCH BY *REJECTION* AS BY PHYSICAL PAIN! REGENERATING, IT COWERED IN THE RAFTERS OF THAT VERY CHURCH, UNCERTAIN, UNTIL IT SENSED SOMEONE ELSE WHO SHARED ITS GROWING *HATRED!*


"*EDDIE BROCK* HAD BEEN AN ACE REPORTER FOR THE *DAILY GLOBE*.
"HE BECAME FAMOUS BY PRINTING INTERVIEWS WITH SOMEONE WHO CLAIMED TO BE THE SERIAL KILLER CALLED *SIN-EATER*.
DAILY BUGLE
GLOBE DUPED
REAL SIN EATER
DAILY BUGLE
"UNTIL, AS SPIDER-MAN, *I* CAPTURED THE *REAL* MURDERER!

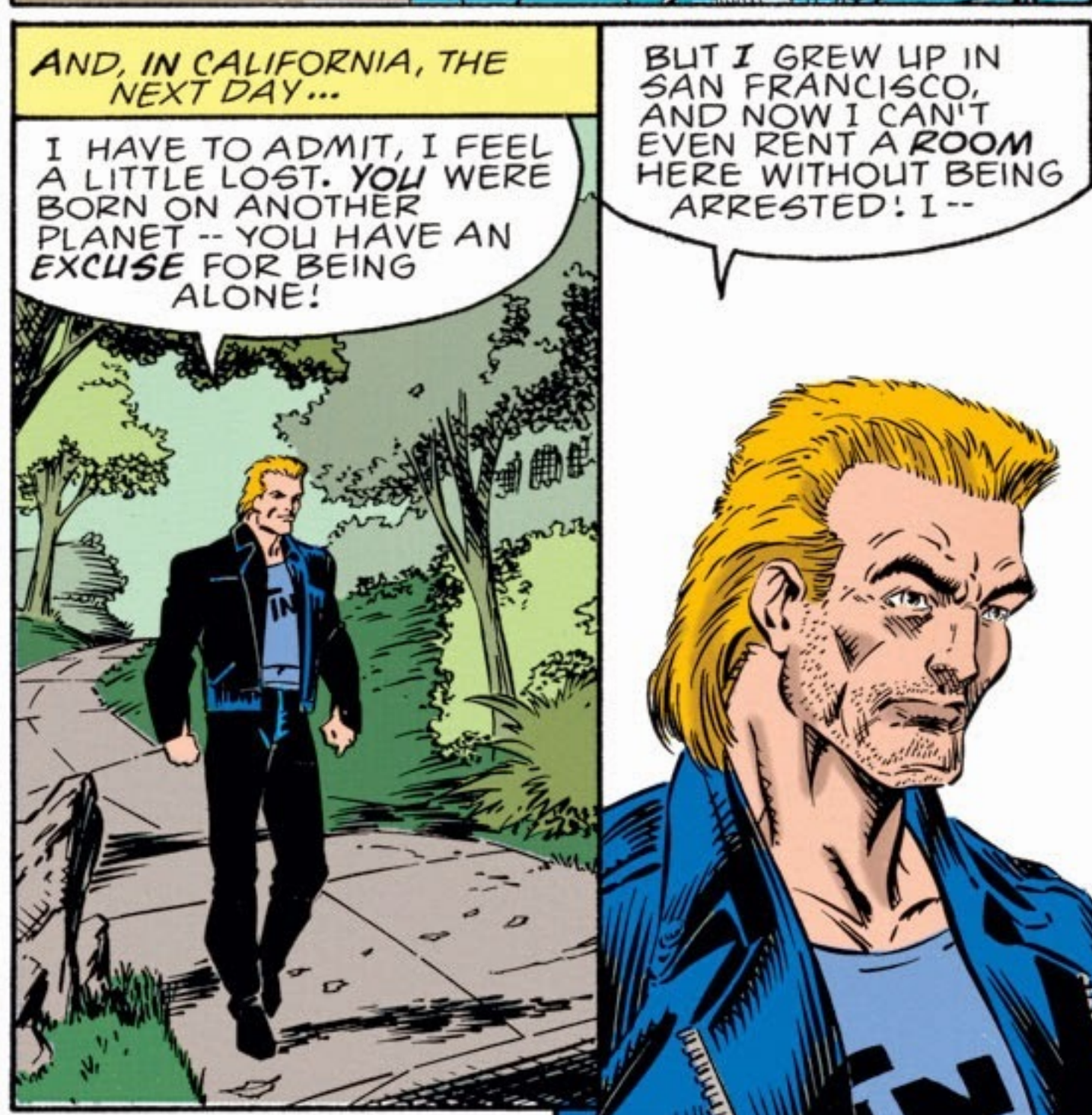

"HE LOST HIS JOB, HIS SELF-RESPECT, EVERYTHING -- AND BLAMED IT ALL ON *ME!* FINDING PURPOSE IN THEIR MUTUAL ANGER, EDDIE AND THE ALIEN JOINED TO BECOME *VENOM!*
"AND TOGETHER, THEIR MAJOR FOCUS WAS TO *DESTROY* ME, SINCE THEY FELT I'D BEEN *RESPONSIBLE* FOR THEIR SEPARATE DOWNFALLS!
"WE BATTLED SEVERAL TIMES.
"MY *DEATH* WAS WHAT THEY LIVED FOR!


"BUT A FEW DAYS AGO, I HELPED SAVE EDDIE'S EX-WIFE! AND THE LOVE HE STILL FELT FOR HER MADE HIM SEE ME IN A NEW LIGHT.
RING-TOSS
"HE SWORE THAT, AS LONG AS I DIDN'T COME AFTER HIM, HE WOULDN'T COME AFTER ME! GUESS HE CONVINCED THE SYMBIOTE, TOO!"*


BUT... BROCK IS SERIOUSLY DISTURBED. AND A KILLER.
*FOR DETAILS, SEE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #375, ON SALE SOON.--DANNY

CAN I LIVE WITH MYSELF IF I DON'T TRY TO CAPTURE HIM...
...NO MATTER WHAT THE PERSONAL COST?

HELLO, MARY JANE? COULD YOU PACK A BAG FOR ME, SWEETHEART? SOMETHING'S COME UP. I HAVE TO GO TO CALIFORNIA.
I'LL TELL YOU MORE WHEN I GET TO THE LOFT.


AND, IN CALIFORNIA, THE NEXT DAY...
I HAVE TO ADMIT, I FEEL A LITTLE LOST. YOU WERE BORN ON ANOTHER PLANET -- YOU HAVE AN EXCUSE FOR BEING ALONE!
BUT I GREW UP IN SAN FRANCISCO, AND NOW I CAN'T EVEN RENT A ROOM HERE WITHOUT BEING ARRESTED! I --

-- Hmm? CONTACT FATHER?
NEVER! THE LAST THING I'LL DO IS ASK THAT ICE-BLOODED MONSTER FOR HELP! BUT...
... WHAT, THEN?

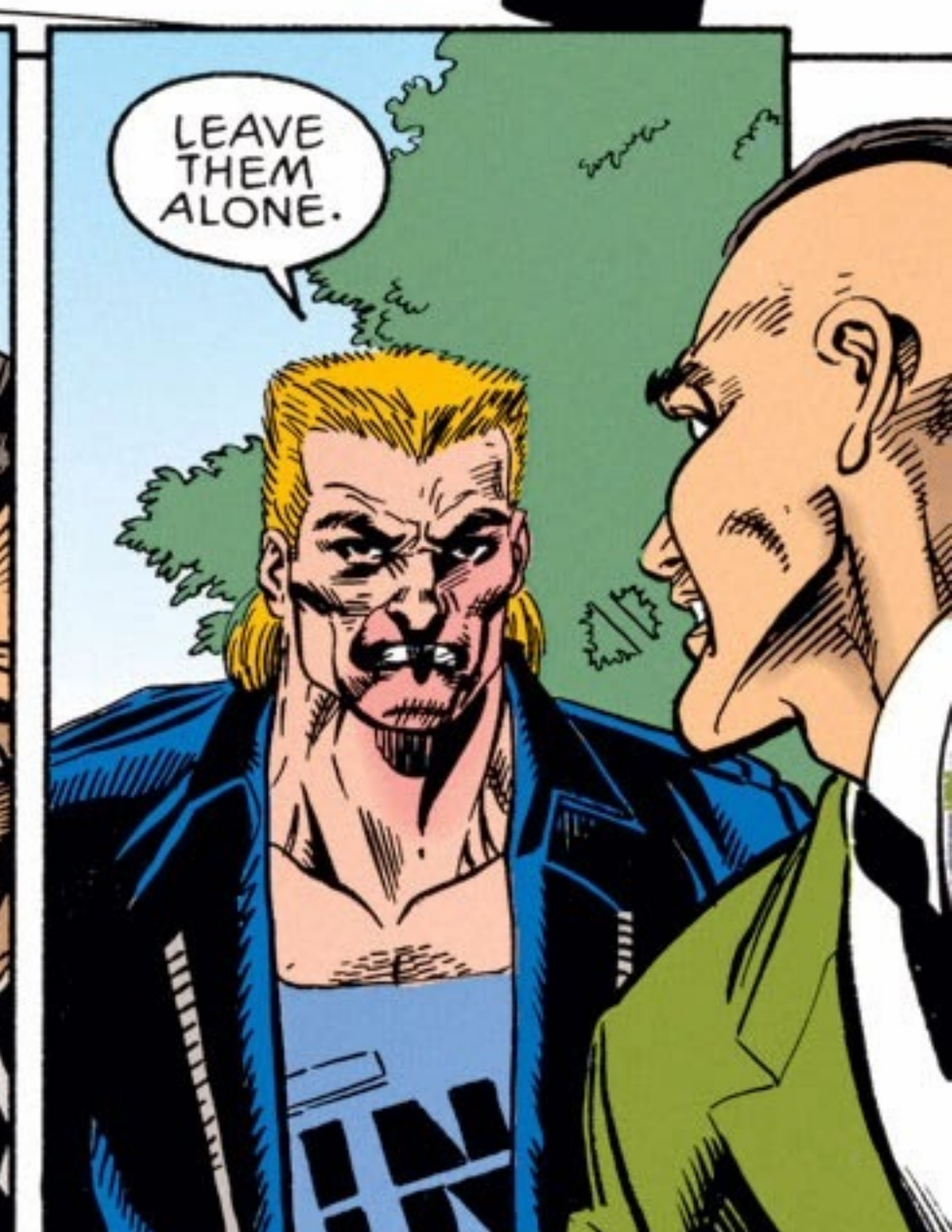
WITHOUT A CAREER, WITHOUT SPIDER-MAN TO RAVAGE, WITHOUT SOME AMBITION...

... WE COULD END UP LIKE THOSE POOR HOMELESS PEOPLE OVER THERE, TRUNDLING OUR SAD POSSESSIONS IN GROCERY CARTS FROM SHELTER TO -- Eh?

WHAT THE --?!
WE WARNED YA TO FIND SOMEWHERE ELSE TO SET UP HOUSEKEEPIN'!
NOW WE'RE GONNA GIVE YA A PLACE TO STAY -- THE HOSPITAL!

I HEAR THEY SERVE SOFT FOOD THERE!
YA WON'T EVEN MISS YER TEETH...!

Huh?


LEAVE THEM ALONE.

Oh, MAN, DID YOU EVER MAKE A MISTAKE!
NO.
AAAAAAG
BUT YOU DID.
WHILE NEARBY...
THWIP
BEEN SEARCHING FOR HOURS, EVER SINCE MY PLANE GOT IN. USED MY PRESS CREDENTIAL AS PETER PARKER TO LEARN THAT BROCK WAS CHECKING INTO A HOTEL WHEN HE WAS SPOTTED!
AND WITH NO PLACE TO GO, I FIGURED HE MIGHT TRY BLENDING IN WITH STREET PEOPLE --
--SO I'VE BEEN CHECKING OUT SHELTERS! WORKERS AT THE LAST ONE SUGGESTED LOCAL PARKS; SEEMS A LOT OF TRANSIENTS GET BY IN THE OPEN. BUT SO FAR --
BDAM BDAM
-- GUNSHOTS!
EVEN IF THEY DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH VENOM. I'D BETTER SEE IF I CAN HELP...

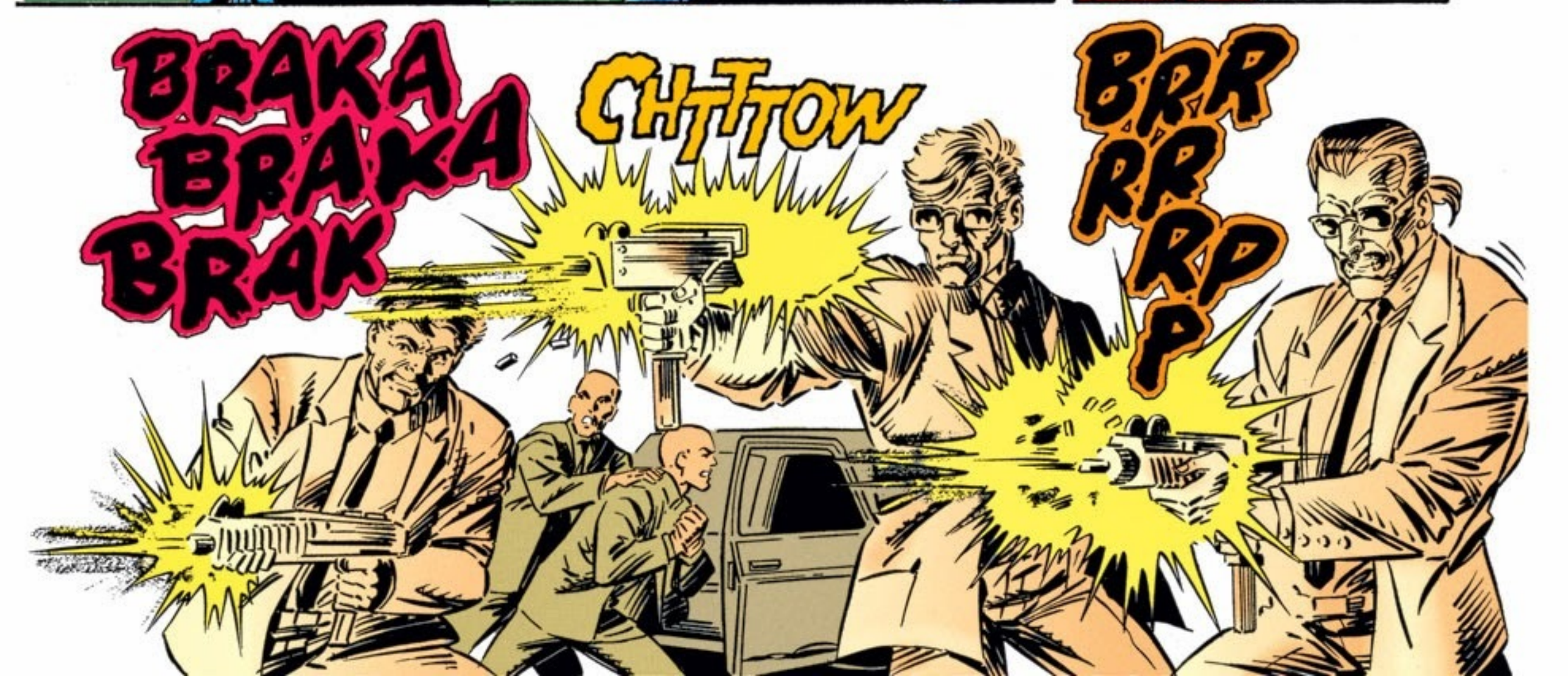
OOO, A BEAR HUG! PERHAPS WHEN WE'RE THROUGH WITH THIS COCKROACH, WE'LL HUG YOU BACK!
TILL YOU BURST!
WHNG
YEESH! YESTERDAY IT WAS COPS --
--AND NOW IT'S THESE GUYS! WHAT ARE THEY: F.B.I? SECRET SERVICE?
I SHOULD'VE KNOWN YOU'D GO BACK TO YOUR OLD WAYS!
SLAMM
ALL THAT TALK ABOUT BOTH OF US PROTECTING INNOCENTS WAS BULL!

BUT YOU WON'T GET ANOTHER CHANCE, VENOM!
THIS ENDS NOW!

SPAAK

YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE -- WE HAD AN ARRANGE-MENT.
WE'LL DISCUSS YOUR BETRAYAL LATER.
FOR THE MOMENT, THERE'S SOME-THING YOU NEED TO KNOW: THOSE GENTLE MEN YOU REFER TO AS PEACE OFFICERS --

--AREN'T!
WHA--?
GET 'IM!


BRAKA BRAKA BRAK
CHTTOW
BRR RR RD P

THIS IS NUTS! THE GUY IN THE SUITS ARE TRYING TO KILL ME -- BUT VENOM ISN'T?!
I'VE GOT A FEW ZILLION QUESTIONS TO ASK --

-- AFTER I MAKE SURE THE "UZI BROTHERS" DON'T WIPE OUT A FEW ZILLION INNOCENT BYSTANDERS!

THERE! LAST ONE!

NOW TO -- AW, GEEZ! I COME THREE THOUSAND MILES LOOKING FOR A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK, ACTUALLY FIND THE SUCKER --
--THEN END UP RIGHT BACK WHERE I STARTED?!

WHERE THE BLOODY BLAZES IS VENOM NOW?!

PORTLAND, OREGON; THE RESIDENCE OF GENERAL ORWELL TAYLOR, U.S ARMY, RETIRED.
THERE HE IS...
THIS JUST IN FROM SAN FRANCISCO...

AT LAST!
"VENGEANCE IS MINE, SAYETH THE LORD!"

AND SOON, HUGH... VERY SOON, INDEED...

... RIGHTEOUS REVENGE WILL BE OURS, AS WELL!

SQUAD LEADER ELKINS? ASSEMBLE YOUR MEN!
TARGET SIGHTED!

BUT, IN SAN FRANCISCO, WITH THE HELP OF NEW FRIENDS, THAT TARGET HAS SINCE DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT!
IMPRESSIVE! I NEVER WOULD'VE SUSPECTED THAT SEWER GRATE TO LEAD ANYWHERE BUT... WELL... A SEWER!
THIS IS PART OF OUR SANCTUARY, MR. BROCK.

AND THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS SHARE IT WITH SOMEONE WHO SO SELFLESSLY CAME TO THE AID OF STRANGERS.

ARE YOU CRAZY, OR JUST STUPID? HE'S VENOM, A PSYCHO WITH A SPACE MONSTER FOR CLOTHES! HOW CAN YOU EVEN THINK OF SHARING OUR --
THAT'S ENOUGH, NATHANIEL!

WHETHER HE STAYS ISN'T UP TO YOU OR ELIZABETH! THE COUNCIL WILL DECIDE!

AND WE'LL ALL ABIDE BY THEIR RULING!
LOOK, I'M GLAD I COULD HELP -- BUT WHO WERE THOSE GUYS?!
THEY'RE THUGS, HIRED BY ROLAND TREECE. HE'S BEEN TRYING TO DRIVE US OUT OF THIS AREA FOR MONTHS!

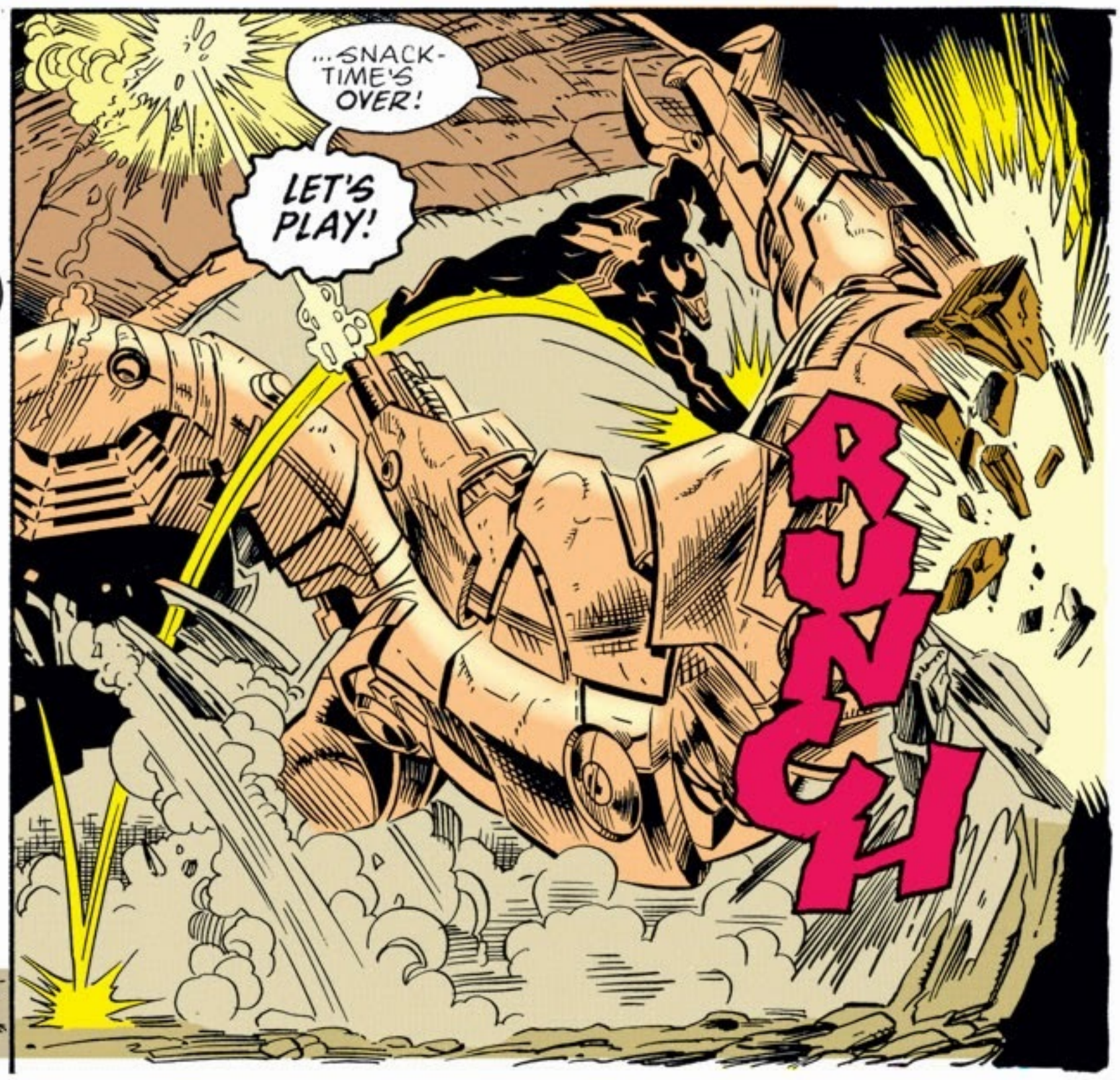
WHY IS ANYONE'S GUESS! BUT HE SEEMS DETERMINED TO --
Shh! THAT SOUND! SOMETHING'S IN THE TUNNEL AHEAD!
WHAT THE --?
Oh, LORD -- DIGGERS!
"TREECE MACHINES, WITH MORE HIRELINGS INSIDE! HE SENDS THEM INTO THE TUNNELS TO LOOK FOR US --
"-- BUT THEY'VE NEVER FOUND US BEFORE!"
GET BEHIND ME! WALK BACK THE WAY WE CAME!
MAYBE IF WE DON'T SEEM TO BE A THREAT, THEY WON'T --
GHFF!

FINALLY GOT ONE O' YOU SCRUFFY LEECHES!
NOW MY DIAMOND DRILLS ARE GONNA GUT YA LIKE A TROUT!

ACTUALLY, WE PREFER FLOUNDER!
CHANK
HOLY CRIPES! WH-WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT?!

GHAAAA!
I DUNNO! BUT THIS LASER CUTTER'S REALLY MAKIN' THE STUFF ON HIS BACK SQUIRM!

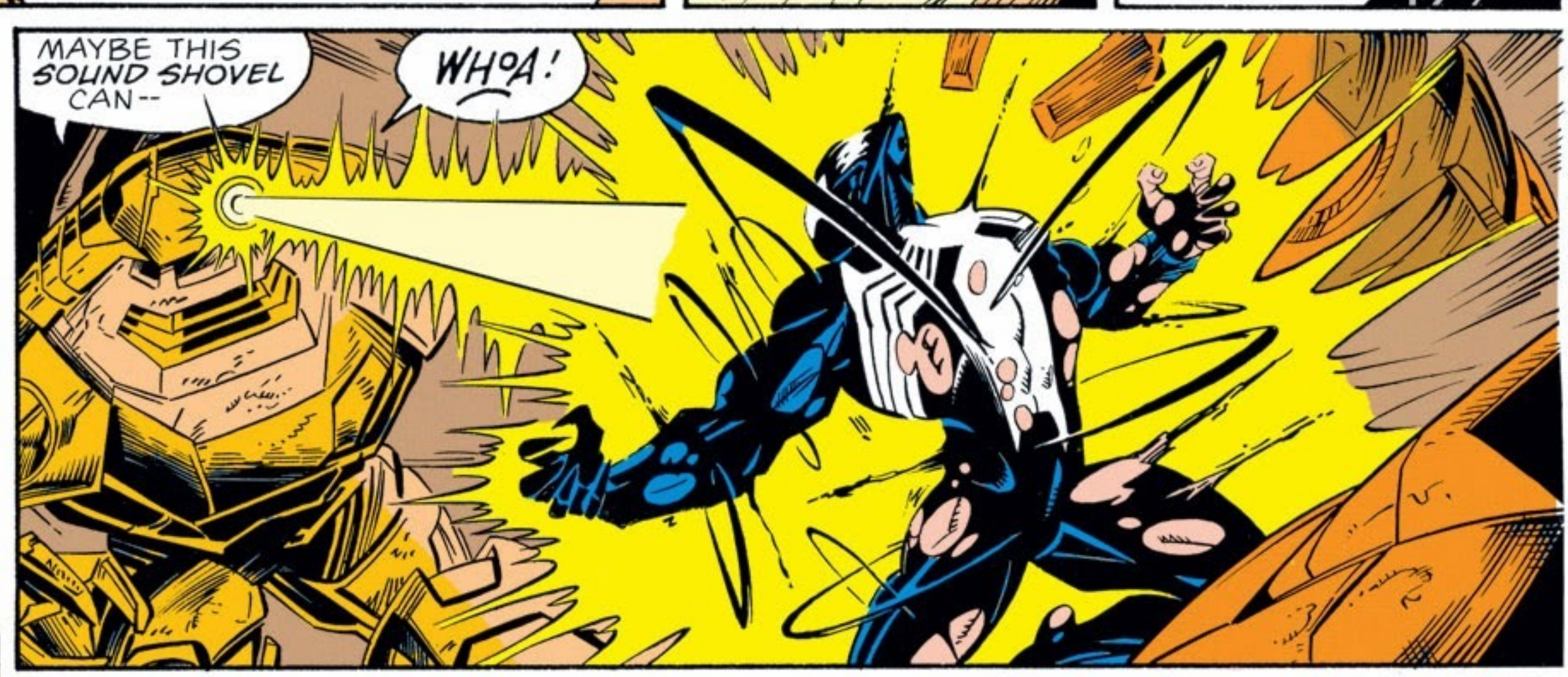
:-SNIFF...:-
BARBECUE?
I THOUGHT WE WERE HAVING FISH!
NEVER MIND...


...SNACK-TIME'S OVER!
LET'S PLAY!
CRUNCH

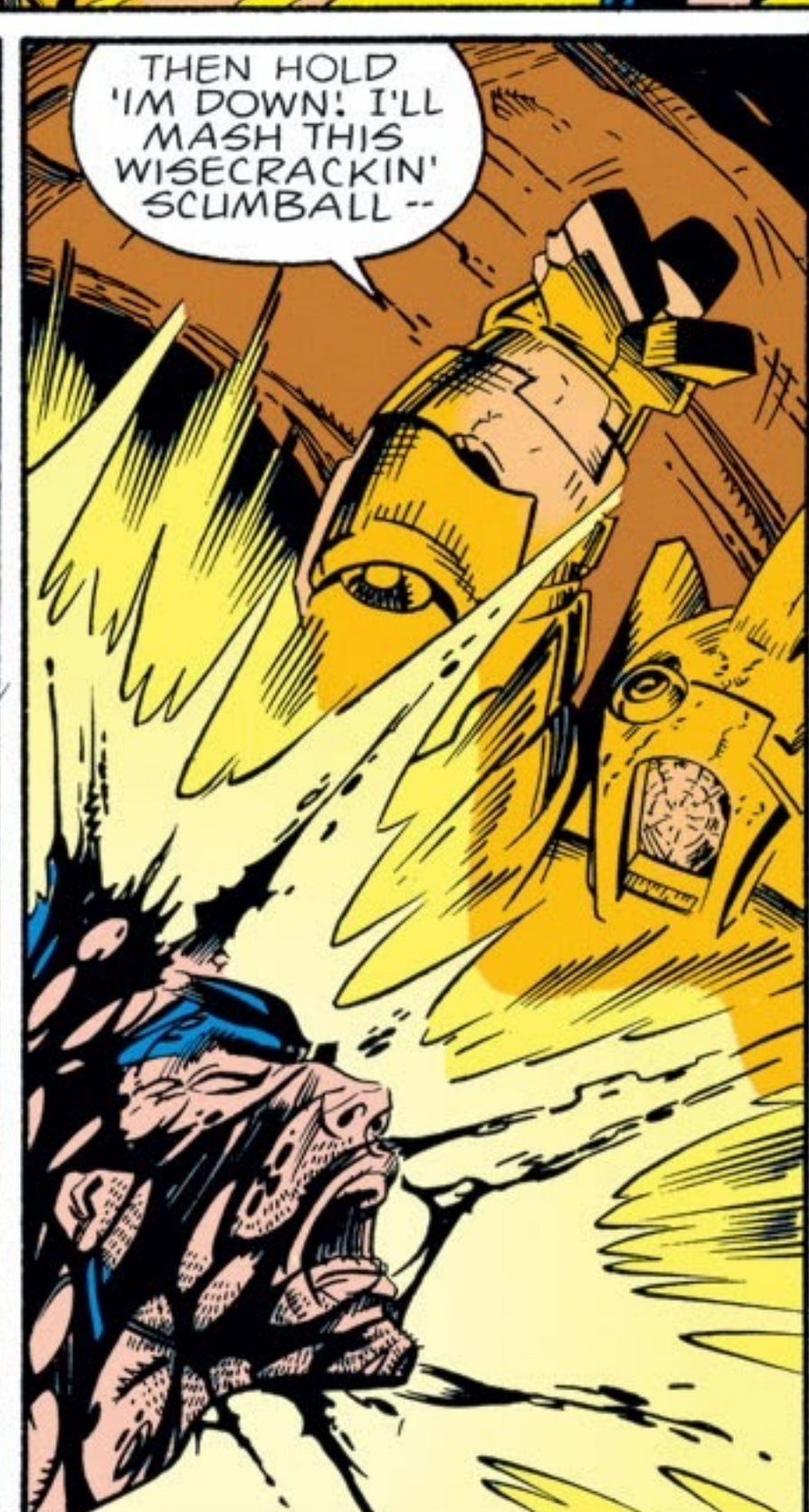
KRISH
TAG -- YOU'RE IT!
WHAT? TIRED ALREADY?
THEN MAYBE WE CAN HELP YOU TAKE A NICE, LONG --

NAP!

BLACK STUFF OO-OOZIN' IN THROUGH THE CRACKS!
HARLAN! H-H-HELP ME!


MAYBE THIS SOUND SHOVEL CAN --
WHOA!

SONIC BEAM'S SURE DOIN' SOME-THIN'!
LOOKS LIKE HE'S IN AGONY!


THEN HOLD 'IM DOWN! I'LL MASH THIS WISECRACKIN' SCUMBALL --

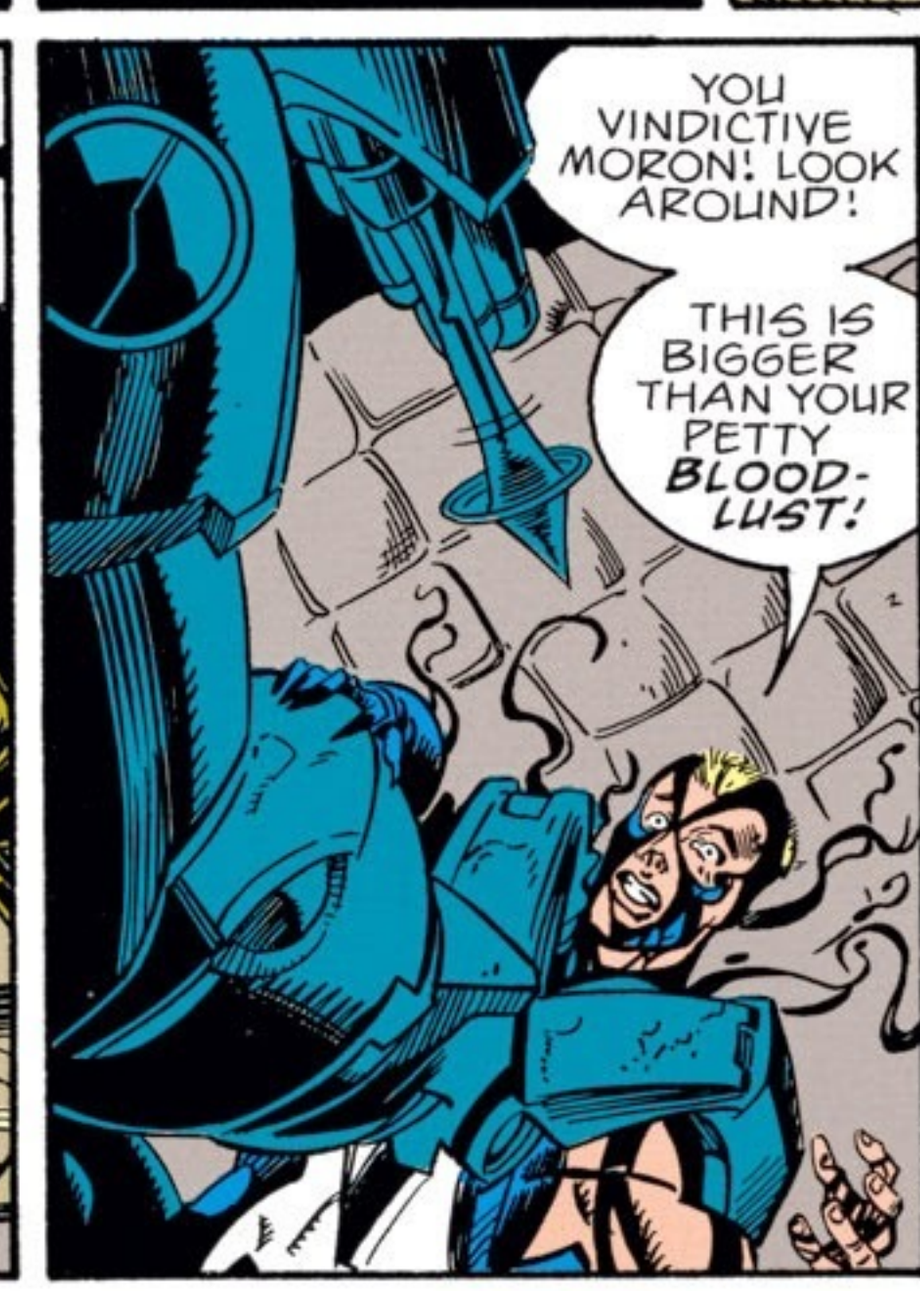
--INTO PULP!

WHU--?
HEY!
FLOOR CRUMBLIN'! WE'RE BOTH GOIN' THROUGH!

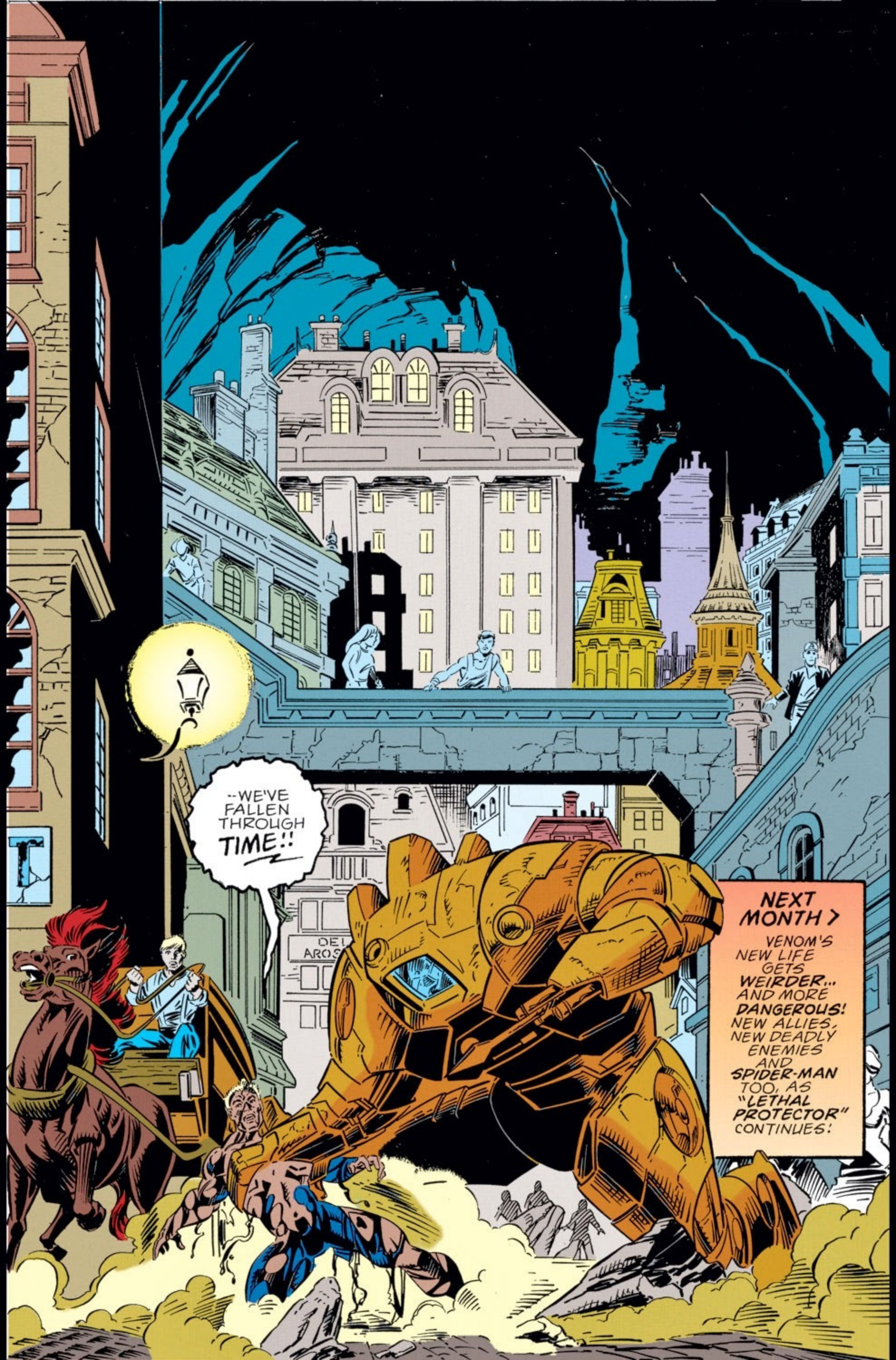
TOO DARK! C-CAN'T SEE WHERE WE'RE --

WHOONF!
HARLAN? C-CAN YA STILL HEAR ME?
DIGGER SUIT CUSHIONED MY IMPACT!
LOOKS LIKE THAT BLACK GOOP DID THE SAME FOR SMART-MOUTH!

BUT HE'S WOBBLY! TOO BUZZED TO FIGHT BACK!
I'M GONNA DIG THIS BUM A NEW NOSTRIL!


YOU VINDICTIVE MORON! LOOK AROUND!
THIS IS BIGGER THAN YOUR PETTY BLOOD-LUST!

WE DIDN'T JUST FALL THROUGH SOME ROTTED TUNNEL FLOOR--
Oh... MY... GOD!


--WE'VE FALLEN THROUGH TIME!!
NEXT MONTH >
VENOM'S NEW LIFE GETS WEIRDER... AND MORE DANGEROUS! NEW ALLIES, NEW DEADLY ENEMIES AND SPIDER-MAN TOO, AS "LETHAL PROTECTOR" CONTINUES!